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1959/09/04

INCOMING TELEGRAM

Department of State

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42 -48

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RMR

FROM: Habana

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 571, September 4, 5 p.m.

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My talk with Fidel Castro and Roa last night. Castro arrived punctually at Roa's apartment at 8:30. The three of us were together until 2 a.m.

Castro expressed unhappiness about delay in seeing me and annoyance at Jules Dubois story. He promised to see me hereafter with maximum 48 hour delay.

I gave him outline under following headings. (See Embassy despatch 135)

1. General sympathy with objectives of Cuban revolution and similarity with many of our own aims and aspirations;
2. Correctness and straightforwardness US Government relations with GOC and our deep resentment at insinuations from Cuban official sources to contrary effect;
3. The struggle against international communism, its implications and our concern at GOC failure to see these implications (I particularly mentioned CHICOM situation);
4. Our deep concern at practically continuous barrage of anti-American statements from Cuban officials and from press, radio of July 26 Movement, and our belief that this attitude was having profound effect on American public opinion;

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5. Our concern at contrast between Cuban statements on Caribbean situation and actual developments;

6. Our serious concern at treatment being given American private interests in Cuba both agriculture and utilities. *

Castro's first reaction to my statement was that I was unduly pessimistic about state our relations. Evidently a good deal of what I had said was new to him or had been forgotten or underestimated in importance. He rallied quickly, however, and proceeded to a denunciation of certain American newspapers and press services. He said he was convinced that anti-Cuban campaign of influential organs would eventually turn 90 percent of American people against Cuba. I dissented stating that I believed there was a pretty fair balance in American press re Cuba and that, considering anti-American statements which have characterized utterances of GOC leaders since January 1, harvest of unfriendly sentiment in US was rather less than would normally have been expected and that this testified to profound desire of US for friendly relations with Cuba.

Conversation after this jumped around a great deal. Castro is comprehensive rather than consecutive talker. Following were principal points made:

(1) Castro regrets some of his own statements against USG and tends challenge our logical interpretation thereof. I believe that some progress has been made in his thinking on this subject.

(2) Castro has been to some extent unaware of anti-American activities of July 26 Movement press and has not heretofore endeavored to exercise any particular influence there. I am hopeful that my vigorous statement on this subject will produce some result but only time can tell. He stated he likes and admires Americans especially tourists for whom he is planning great things.

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great things.

(3) Castro is wholly absorbed in details of agrarian reform and of military activities here. He confessed he did not function as "Prime Minister" but rather as expeditor of certain projects in which he has particular interest. He stated he intends cut down sharply on public appearance and concentrate more and more on actual work. He is just beginning have concept basic economics and cited per capita cost creating new jobs.

(4) As consequence of (3), Castro has taken no interest in international situation or threat of international communism. He accepts support of local Communists because it helps him politically and in labor circles. We had most elementary discussion of Berlin situation and of Khrushchev visit, in course of which he indicated he had heard little or nothing on these subjects and was not much interested. He stated that since Cuba could not influence these situations, and he would not be present, for example, when President Eisenhower talks to Khrushchev, why should he give time to these matters? I tried explain significance of support of all peoples of free world in great struggle between freedom and slavery but do not believe he was particularly impressed. He did repeat what he had told me last March to effect he hoped people of West Berlin would be able choose own fate and not be subject Soviet domination.

(5) With regard to Chinese Communists and reception here of Chinese newspapermen, he appeared totally unable realize implications from our point of view of this situation. He said Chinese newspapermen had been received with courtesy just as newspapermen of any other country would be received.

(6) Castro's views on matter of communism is of course strongly influenced by his stated conviction that Cuba under his leadership is breaking new ground in social and economic theory and does not need involve itself unduly in struggle between ideologies which he evidently considers inferior his own.

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TO: Secretary of State

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8:35 p.m.

(7) With regard anti-American attitudes of officials and party press here, I believe I made some progress. I mentioned Che Guevara's statements and Cuban Ambassador to Haiti as recent flagrant examples. I hope that he will do something constructive although he will obviously not engage in any overt rectifications. I endeavored leave no doubt his mind importance US public opinion in connection relations between two governments.

(8) In discussing Caribbean situation, Castro was evidently ill at ease. He spoke of Trujillo's provocations as justifying counteractions which he then somewhat confusedly tended to imply had been carried out without his consent or authority. I got clear impression that he does not, in absence of further provocation from Dominican Republic, intend countenance any more expeditions. He did not say this explicitly. In fact, his whole handling this subject was confused and uneasy.

(9) With regard to American private interests in Cuba, Castro agreed to general proposition these had made important contributions to country's economy and were entitled to decent treatment. He is, however, definitely determined to continue action against many of these companies. I do not believe he will personally handle many of these matters. Also I believe practical difficulties of agrarian reform will modify many of his present intentions and dispel many illusions he now holds.

(10) With regard to telephone company, he expressed particular hostility. He referred to abusive rates obtained by company

from Batista

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from Batista at time of heavy bloodshed attendant on Palace assault in March 1957. He expressed unflattering view of company's policies. I made clear to him our concern with regard to treatment of company since intervention, referring to increased expenses, reduced revenues and increased indebtedness.

(11) Castro made no particular comment with reference to electric company failing reply my statement that company had been unfairly treated by having its rates reduced without opportunity to comment on investigation committee's report.

(12) Castro indicated that other Batista concessions to American private interests would come under review. He referred particularly to the Moa Bay contract. In this connection, I was able to set him straight on the falsity of widely circulated story here to the effect that Batista signed the Moa Bay contract as part of "deal" following Ambassador Smith's denunciation in July 1957 of treatment of Santiago women by Cuban police. Castro seemed genuinely impressed by proof I was able to give him that time sequence was in fact reverse of that required to substantiate story. He stated, however, that Moa Bay contract had been signed by Batista government against recommendation of National Economy Council and I am sure we will have trouble on this score. I stressed our high concept of Moa Bay interests and our own interest in purchase of nickel.

(13) Castro and Koa ganged up on me with regard need for massive US help to enable Cuba and other LA countries to industrialize. They recognized heavy burdens we already bearing in free world defense but stated importance of situation and aspirations LA peoples (against whom we have allegedly discriminated in favor Africa and Asia) warranted further sacrifices on our part. They appeared deeply convinced of correctness their position on this.

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